INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC SOCIAL SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT LAW
Peer Reviewed, Referred & Indexed Journal
E-ISSN: 3070-0558
VOL.7, NO.2 (2026)

CREATIVITY & INNOVATION IN RESEARCH

TITLE: CREATIVITY AS A CORE COMPETENCY: PREPARING STUDENTS FOR AN INNOVATIVE WORLD

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Creativity as a Core Competency: Preparing Students for an Innovative World

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Abstract

The ability to innovate, imagine, and create new things is essential to both academic achievement and an individual's personal growth. In addition, they cultivate analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, and the ability to learn new things in students. In the 21st century, where technology is rapidly evolving, there is inadequate learning in traditional academic rote-learning methods. The objective is to analyze the role of creativity in preparing students for future workforce and societal challenges. Recent studies indicate that digital technologies, collaborative tasks, and real-world problem-solving activities promote innovation and adaptability among learners. However, the literature also identifies barriers such as rigid curricula and exam-oriented systems. The study is a qualitative descriptive research study with secondary source data supported by literature analysis. The finding indicates the impact of student exposure to an independent, creative learning environment, which demonstrates improved adaptability, confidence, innovation, and critical thinking. The study concludes that creativity in curriculum design, teacher training, and assessment reforms is needed to prepare students for an innovative world, where education policy shifts towards holistic development and institutions can prepare graduates who are not just job-seekers, but job-creators, and capable of solving complex global challenges.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Analytical thinking, Independent Creativity, Innovation, Problem Solving.

1. Introduction:

Creativity is the characteristic of a person to generate new ideas, alternatives, solutions, and possibilities in a unique and different way. It is the ability to conceive something unpredictable, original and unique. It must be expressive, exciting and imaginative. This may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves. It allows us to exploration and communication beyond the limitation of words.

Creativity is fun and joyful and surprising and most the important is it keeps the mind active. A set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes which enable someone to cope with challenges, to solve problems, and to generate elements like ideas, unique observation and understanding the artistic products in a new, original way. In students' creativity is very important, as this expanding their creative capacity can make students more adapt at forming original ideas, as well as exercising their critical thinking skills. This is also a life skill, which can help students unlock new avenues in their personal self-expression. Creativity involves the ability to generate original ideas, think critically, and solve problems in novel ways. It is not limited to artistic expression but extends to all domains, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Educational institutions must therefore shift their focus toward fostering creativity to prepare students for future challenges.

Competency is defined as the ability to do something effectively and successfully by applying the right combination of knowledge, skills, and attitude. Webster and Hillson (2002) mentioned five core elements of competency which are personal characteristics, experience, attitude, knowledge, and skills. As a learner competency is your ability to effectively understand the knowledge what you have learn and how to apply, and use the right blend of core elements in real situations or challenges.

2. Literature Review:

The concept of creativity has been widely explored by scholars across psychology and education, evolving from a narrow focus on artistic expression to a broad competency essential for innovation and problem-solving. The study of creativity has evolved significantly over the years. Early work by Guilford (1950) introduced the concept of

divergent thinking, as a key component of creativity, highlighting the ability to generate multiple solutions to a problem, which laid the foundation for subsequent research in cognitive creativity, emphasizing the ability to produce multiple solutions to a problem. Later, Rhodes (1961) proposed the influential 4Ps model ***(Person, Process, Product, and Press***), framing creativity as an interaction between individual traits, cognitive processes, outputs, and environmental factors, thereby expanding its scope beyond individual ability to include contextual influences. Torrance (1974) further developed this concept through standardized tests that measure creativity based on ***fluency, flexibility, originality,*** and ***elaboration.*** Gardner's (1983) theory of ***multiple intelligences*** expanded the understanding of creativity by recognizing diverse forms of intelligence. Amabile (1996) proposed the ***componential theory of creativity***, highlighting the importance of domain skills, creative processes, and intrinsic motivation, emphasizing that supportive environments and motivation are crucial for creative performance. Robinson (2006) criticized traditional education systems for suppressing creativity and advocated for reforms that prioritize creative development.

Similarly, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009) identified creativity as one of the essential competencies required for success in modern society. Recent studies emphasize the role of innovative teaching methods such as project-based learning and inquiry-based approaches in enhancing creativity among students (Sawyer, 2012). Recent empirical studies also highlight that creativity is increasingly recognized in global curricula, although there remains a significant gap between policy intentions and classroom practices, particularly in providing teachers with practical strategies to foster creativity effectively. The modern literature highlights the role of creativity in addressing complex global challenges, positioning it as a key competency for the 21st century alongside critical thinking and collaboration. Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that creativity is a multifaceted and developable skill influenced by cognitive, social, and environmental factors, and that fostering it within education requires a shift toward learner-centered pedagogies, supportive policies, and innovative teaching practices.

3. Methodology

This study is a qualitative descriptive research approach based on secondary data and data were collected from academic journals, books, and reports related to creativity and education**.** Thematic data analysis used to identify key patterns and insights.

4. Objective of the Study:

1. To Identify the skills in students like critical thinking, problem solving techniques and innovation.
2. To explore essential skills required for creativity.
3. To suggest strategies and policies for integrating creativity into education curriculum.

5. Importance of Creativity in the 21st Century:

In 21st Century Creativity is a foundational skill, essential for driving innovation, economic growth, and solving complex global problems. It is crucial for adapting to rapid technological advancements, including AI and automation, by providing uniquely human capabilities like empathy and original thinking. It fosters adaptability in work, education, and personal well-being for every individual. Today, amidst the chaos of the world, creativity has emerged as the most highly significant element of education. That is the kind of education that readies students who can thoughtfully and imaginatively face any of the future challenges that may come their way. Therefore, traditional learning models have been changing, and the role of creativity in preparing students for future education has taken on the importance of creativity.

5.1 Understanding Creativity as a Core Competency

Creative Thinking is one of the Thinking Core Competency's two interrelated sub-competencies, it is treating as a fundamental, trainable life skill rather than an innate artistic talent which empowers develope students understanding and ability to

move beyond passive knowledge retention and transforming them into independent problem-solvers, critical thinkers, and flexible learners ready for the future.

5.2. Definition and Characteristics:

Creativity is defined as the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others. The Creative process is the flow of thoughts and actions that define the final stages of an idea. People who have discovered their innovative potential and transformed their idea into reality have usually been through this process.

There are five key characteristics of creative people who think differently.

a) **Flexibility:** Flexible thinkers are not hemmed in by being overly-focused on one way of doing things and tend to be open to innovation. They also have the capacity to understand when something is not working and then to change to an alternative solution/approach.
b) **A sense of intense curiosity:** Creative thinkers are fascinated with the world around them. They ask lots of questions, and tend to develop a very intense focus that takes them into almost a reverie as they try to discover how something works, or the detail of a beautiful structure.
c) **Positive attitude:** A positive attitude is essential for thinking creatively as this positivity that spurs the mind on to seek detail, wonder, and, indeed, solutions.
d) **Strong motivation and determination:** This is where the hard work of the creative comes in. From creating software solutions for major problems, through to creating social capital through community building, or painting a work of art, creativity requires the follow-through that can only come from strong motivation and determination.
e) **Fearlessness:** The highly creative people tend to believe in the VALUE of the ideas they come up with. Remember, they are also flexible, so they are willing to change; however, they do not seem to be worried about whether their idea is right or wrong because they believe that their idea brings value to the field in which it resides, even if it may later be debunked.

6. Creativity vs. Innovation

Creativity is the ability to conceive something unpredictable, original and unique. Innovation is closely tied to creativity i.e. putting creative ideas into action is an innovation, whose consequences should be positive. Creativity is related to 'imagination', but innovation is related to 'implementation.

6.1. Key Differences Between Creativity and Innovation

The following are the major differences between Creativity and Innovation:

1. The quality of thinking new ideas and putting them into reality is creativity. The act of executing the creative ideas into practice is innovation.
2. Creativity is an imaginative process as opposed to innovation is a productive process and Creativity can never be measured, but Innovation can be measured.
3. Creativity is related to the generation of ideas which are new and unique. Conversely, Innovation is related to introduce something better into the market.
4. Creativity does not require money. On the other hand, innovation requires money and there is no risk involved in creativity, whereas the risk is always attached to innovation.

7. Components of Creative Thinking:

i. **Fluency:** The ability to produce a large number of ideas quickly. The focus is on quantity rather than quality. For example, brainstorming many possible solutions to a problem shows strong fluency.

ii. **Originality**: The ability to come up with unique or unusual ideas. These ideas are not common or predictable and often stand out because they are innovative.

iii. **Elaboration:** this involves expanding on an idea by adding details, improving it, or developing it further. It turns a simple idea into a completer and more workable one.

iv. **Problem Sensitivity**: This is the ability to recognize problems or gaps that others might overlook. Creative thinkers are often good at identifying issues and opportunities for improvement.

v. **Imagination:** the ability to form new ideas or mental images that are not present in reality. It plays a key role in thinking beyond the obvious.

vi. **Risk-Taking**: Creative thinking involves the willingness to take risks, try new things, and not fear failure. It encourages experimentation and exploration.

vii. **Curiosity:** This drives creative thinking. It involves asking questions, seeking new information, and being eager to learn and explore.

These components help individuals think in innovative ways, solve problems effectively, and adapt to new challenges.

8. Role of Teachers in Fostering Creativity:

Teachers play a central role in nurturing creativity among students by shaping both the learning environment and the way knowledge is explored. One of the key roles of teachers is to create a supportive and open classroom environment where students feel safe to express their ideas without fear of criticism.

- When students know their thoughts are valued, they are more willing to take intellectual risks and experiment with new ideas.
- By using diverse teaching methods such as project-based learning, group discussions, storytelling, role-playing, and problem-solving activities.
- These methods engage students actively and allow them to apply their imagination and critical thinking skills.
- Creative teachers motivate students to ask “why,” “how,” and “what if” questions, which helps deepen understanding and stimulates innovative thinking.
- Providing constructive feedback is equally important, teachers guide students to improve their ideas, helping them refine and develop their creative abilities.
- Teachers also act as role models of creativity. When they demonstrate enthusiasm, openness to new ideas, and flexible thinking, students are more likely to adopt similar attitudes.

Finally, teachers are not just transmitters of knowledge but facilitators of creativity, guiding students to become innovative thinkers prepared for the challenges of the modern world.

9. Teaching Strategies to Enhance Creativity*:*

Enhancing student creativity involves fostering a safe, supportive environment that encourages curiosity and risk-taking. Key strategies include using open-ended assignments, facilitating collaborative group work, incorporating, visual arts and technology, and prioritizing process over final products.

- Using project-based learning helps students solve real-life problems creatively and Brainstorming sessions allow students to generate many new ideas.
- Asking open-ended questions promotes deeper and flexible thinking also group activities help students learn from different perspectives.
- Storytelling and role-play improve imagination and creativity also by providing choices in learning tasks increases student interest.
- Use of technology helps students explore innovative ideas and Creative activities like drawing and writing enhance expression.
- A positive classroom environment supports creative thinking. Students should be allowed to learn from mistakes without fear.
- Reflection helps students understand and improve their thinking and encouraging independent learning builds confidence and creativity.

10. Barriers to Creativity in Education:

Barriers to teaching for creativity included a lack of academic education, training, and continuous professional development. The curriculum itself may also limit physical education teachers from teaching for creativity**.**

- Overemphasis on standardized testing limits creative thinking and focus on memorization rather than understanding and imagination.
- Teacher-centered classrooms restrict student participation and Rigid and inflexible curriculum structures.

- Limited teacher training in creative teaching methods and fear of failure and making mistakes among students.
- Classroom environments that discourage risk-taking. Inadequate resources and infrastructure in schools.
- Assessment systems that ignore originality and innovation and cultural expectations that value conformity over creativity.
- Peer pressure that discourages unique expression and Lack of encouragement for questioning and curiosity. Low confidence or communication barriers among students.
- Passive use of technology instead of interactive learning.

11. Impact of Creativity on Student Development:

Creativity plays a vital role in student development by enhancing both cognitive and personal growth. It encourages students to think critically and approach problems from multiple perspectives, which strengthens their problem-solving abilities and decision-making skill.

- Creativity improves problem-solving skills.in and student and encourages critical thinking.
- Increases curiosity and interest in learning and helps students understand concepts better.
- Student builds confidence and self-esteem and also build the supports system and to control emotional expression.
- Enhances communication skills and encourages teamwork and collaboration also Promotes independent learning which develops imagination and innovation.
- Helps students adapt to new situations and builds resilience and ability to handle failure.
- Improves overall academic performance and makes learning more enjoyable.
- Prepares students for real-life challenges. and face the competitive world.

12. Policy Implications and Recommendations:

Promoting creativity through the STEAM framework (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) requires a shift from traditional teaching to an integrated, innovation-driven system. The following policy recommendations provide a comprehensive approach:

a) **Curriculum Integration: Policies** should mandate the integration of arts with STEM subjects to form STEAM, encouraging interdisciplinary learning.
b) **Flexible and Inquiry-Based Learning:** Education policies must support flexible curricula that allow project-based, inquiry-based, and experiential learning.
c) **Teacher Training and Professional Development:** Governments and institutions should provide continuous training for teachers in STEAM pedagogy, design thinking, and creative instruction. Teachers must be equipped to guide interdisciplinary and hands-on learning effectively.
d) **Infrastructure and Resource Development:** Schools should be equipped with STEAM labs, maker spaces, art studios, and digital tools. Access to materials such as robotics kits, design software, and art supplies is essential for hands-on creativity.
e) **Technology Integration:** Policies should encourage meaningful use of technology, including coding, simulation tools, digital design, and virtual labs, to enhance creative exploration rather than passive consumption.
f) **Collaboration and Industry Partnerships:** Educational institutions should collaborate with industries, research centres, and creative professionals to provide real-world exposure, mentorship, and innovation opportunities for students.
g) **Inclusive and Equitable Access:** Policies must ensure that all students, regardless of background, have equal access to STEAM education. Special initiatives should support under-resourced schools and marginalized communities.
h) **Encouraging Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** Schools should promote innovation through competitions, hackathons, exhibitions, and startup

incubation programs. Students should be encouraged to turn creative ideas into practical solutions.

i) **Supportive Learning Environment: Policies** should create safe and open classroom environments where students can experiment, take risks, and learn from failure without fear of punishment or judgment.

j) **Parental and Community Engagement: Parents** and communities should be involved in supporting creative learning through workshops, exhibitions, and local innovation projects.

k) **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Governments should establish systems to monitor the implementation of STEAM policies and evaluate their impact on student creativity and learning outcomes.

Policy recommendations aim to transform education into a dynamic, creative, and skill-oriented system where students are not only learners but also innovators, problem-solvers, and creators prepared for future challenges.

13. Conclusion:

Creativity has emerged as a fundamental competency in contemporary education, essential for preparing students to navigate the complexities of an innovative and rapidly evolving world. This study highlights that creativity is not merely an inherent talent but a developable skill influenced by cognitive, motivational, and environmental factors. The analysis of existing literature demonstrates that student-centered pedagogical approaches—such as project-based, inquiry-based, and collaborative learning—play a significant role in fostering creative thinking and problem-solving abilities. Furthermore, the role of teachers as facilitators is crucial in creating supportive learning environments that encourage curiosity, experimentation, and risk-taking. The integration of technology offers promising opportunities for enhancing creativity through personalized learning and global collaboration, although challenges related to access and implementation remain. Overall, fostering creativity requires a holistic and systemic approach involving curriculum reform, innovative teaching practices, teacher professional development, and supportive educational policies. Future educational frameworks must continue to

emphasize creativity as a core competency to ensure sustainable development and progress in an increasingly complex world.

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